

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Sharon M. Palmer

March 10, 2008

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischman and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity.

I am Sharon Palmer, President of the AFT Connecticut a diverse 28,000 member AFL-CIO Union. You have a large list of bills before you today and I will remark briefly on few of them.

RB5871 concerning the Best Program is an excellent bill. It moves us forward with a program which supports teachers in a much more productive and effective way. This bill will help us retain new teachers in the profession and will go a long way toward improving the quality of teaching.

RB647 concerning charter schools raises some perennial issues.

- We continue to oppose the expansion of charter schools beyond the current cap of 24. Additional "site charters" as proposed in section 2(g) are merely a way to skirt current law and create charter chains.
- We also continue to oppose the language set forth in lines 392-403 and 431-439 which proposes to fund charter schools on a state-wide net per pupil expenditure. We are quite sure this is higher than the current allocation and also higher than the poor

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communities where the charters are located. If anything, appropriations should be aligned with the communities where the school is located.

Our new concerns are:

- We do not see the need for “alternative charter schools.” A state charter should cover that need by definition.
- Lines 70-85 are curious and seem to be tailored to specific circumstances and for no logical reason.
 - ✓ Why must the State Board of Education approve two new charters limited to less than 100 students?
 - ✓ Why must the State only permit additions of 575 students or more to existing charter schools?

We urge you to look carefully at all of these sections of the bill and change the language.

Lastly, we want to go on the record as supporting RB5868 concerning recruiting at high schools and RB648 concerning charter school governance.

Again, thank you for providing this hearing opportunity.